

JAPAN CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY NEWS

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CHRISTIAN SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The Christian's concern for his social responsibility reached a high point of interest during the last three months with these developments:

1) The United Church of Christ in Japan in April officially approved a lengthy statement on Christian Social Action which was developed by the fourth section of the Evangelism Research Institute.

2) A five day conference was held at Amagi-Sanso June 9-13 with Dr. Eduard Heimann of the New School for Social Research in New York.

3) The United Church decided to publish the Heimann lectures and will distribute them to all district conferences for study.

UNITED CHURCH APPROVES STATEMENT

The Church in Japan has been increasingly interested in its social responsibility at least since Dr. John Bennett came to Japan eight years ago and spoke on this topic with church leaders here. Then about six years ago the social problems commission was set up on a national basis in the United Church of Christ. The growing consciousness that a statement of belief on this vital issue was needed resulted in the commission to the fourth section of the Evangelism Research Institute last year to draft such a document. The fourth section is headed by Dr. Hidenobu Kuwata, President of the Tokyo Theological College. The paper was written by three professors in Kyoto. They are: Doshisha University professors the Rev. Kakuichi Oshima, Masao Takenaka and Keichiro Shimada.

The statement is entitled "The Christian's Social Index (Creed?) of the United Church of Christ". It begins with the "Presupposition of Christian Social Action" which gives the theological background for the more practical enumeration of problems which comes to the reader under the title "The Direction of Christian Social Action".

The paper begins by pointing up the difference in vocation of the Christian and the non-Christian: "the form of the Christian's work is similar to that of those who do the work of this world but the motive is entirely different." That there is a purposeful plan in history and that history is in the hand of the Creator-God is pointed out early. "Man the creature can know the meaning of history and rightly participate in the formation of history only as one who knows God, loves God and serves God."

"Despite the fact that we have rebelled against God, Christ in the cross has conquered the power of sin and death, bestowing upon us freedom and calling us to serve the purpose of God."

"Man's justification is by faith alone, never by works. However the faith on which grace is bestowed unceasingly seeks works of love. He who is justified by faith hears God's voice saying, 'Relate yourself to your neighbor in love'".

"Man as he is seen in the Bible is an individual in fellowship with others. The community of love does not permit deviation in the direction either of individualism or of collectivism. Individualism without community is in danger of turning into anarchy; a collectivism which destroys the freedom of the individual is in danger of falling into tyranny. The individual who in faith stands before God assuredly realizes responsible fellowship with his neighbor as a personality in love; apart from such fellowship neither the individual nor the collective has any meaning."

"The attempt to relate the orders of marriage, the family, economics, politics and culture to the community of love must itself be the beginning and the end of Christian social action."

"....This, however, does not make it possible for us immediately to formulate a so-called 'Christian social program'. Nevertheless we must not evade our ethical proclamation in the face of the endlessly-changing social situation. What we must proclaim is never a set of fixed formulae, but rather the decision of faith made in the midst of the process of history."

With these background declarations the second section on "The Direction of Social Action" begins. It is set in the present realities of Japan. The main headings are four: 1) Problems of World Peace, 2) Political Problems, 3) Economic Problems and 4) Problems of the Family. Here we record pertinent statements on each of these problems as written in the index for social action.

Problems of World Peace: 1) "The urgent demand of the Bible upon men is for action in behalf of peace." 2) "We also intend firmly to safeguard the spirit of the 9th article of the Japanese constitution, to oppose re-armament, and to lay the foundation for world peace." 3) "We advocate the cessation of the production, use and testing of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction." 4) "We strive that the constitution of the United Nations shall be still further improved." 5) "We oppose the erecting of tariff walls as an expression of the selfishness of one nation. The development of under-developed regions has now become a world responsibility." 6) "It is the responsibility of each individual Christian not only to speak and to pray for peace, but to have a part in any measures, public or private, which will aid in the realization of international peace."

Political Problems: 1) "The Christian must so participate in politics as a citizen that the state fulfills its true function and that power is given to social justice." 2) "The freedom of the church, the family, the university and other non-political groups must always be respected by the state." 3) "The state, without any class bias, as the protector of justice in economic life, must strive for welfare through stabilized production and just distribution." 4) "Especially must the Christian citizen, as the public conscience, combat the bureaucratization which looks upon the people not as the ends of politics but as a means to state power."

Economic Problems: 1) "The purpose of the economy is to serve the cause of community by means of cooperation and exchange in labor..." 2) "The ethical problem which capitalism presents is that capitalistic private ownership, through an excessive concern for profit, comes to the point of forgetting its service to the community." 3) "In the conduct of industry the responsible creativity of owners and managers and the dignity of the workers as men must first of all be respected." 4) "The Christian must rightly evaluate the role of the sound labor union which struggles against exploitation and strives to create a better working environment for the worker....and restore the lost dignity of work." Unemployment, over-population, low standard of living for the farmers and the need for an adequate social security system were other subjects treated.

Problems of the Family: 1) "In today's society where the ethics of man-woman relationships are being greatly shaken, the Church must zealously give direction for true married life." 2) The problem of legal and illegal abortions is treated and a call for birth control education is sounded. 3) "At a time when the roots of a feudalistic, patriarchal authoritarianism still remain deeply embeded in the families of our country, modern individualism has entered in an undigested form and has given rise to unfortunate human relationships and to friction." The Church must offer help in this field.

In conclusion the statement said, "Deficiency of faith, lack of imagination, slowness of decision--all these cause us to procrastinate and leave us standing still at the threshold of clear-cut, effective action. Christians in the churches of Japan....must go steadfastly forward."

ECONOMICS AND SOCIAL SCIENCE CONFERENCE

126 Episcopal, Lutheran, United Church and Korean churchmen, Seminary professors, missionaries and economics and social science scholars met with Dr. Eduard Heimann at Amagi-Sanso Retreat, June 9-13. The purpose of the conference was to continue the process of study currently taking place in Japan on social and economic problems and the church's relationship to them.

One of the many topics discussed was the Christian approach to the present day ideologies. The conclusion was that social concern should penetrate the church more and more to the local level. To that end the lectures will be published and used as a text at local conferences of the United Church of Christ throughout Japan. To realize the results at the local level was the expressed desire of the conference and the goal of the future.

Dr. Heimann is a German born scholar who is presently a lecturer at the Union Theological Seminary in New York as well as a Professor at the New School for Social Research there. He returns to the States this week.

UNITED CHURCH MODERATOR TO SINGAPORE

The Rev. Takeshi Muto, Moderator of the United Church of Christ in Japan, left on June 25 for Singapore to attend the Working Committee of the East Asia Christian Conference. He travelled by Japan Air Lines.

The East Asia Christian Conference is made up of representatives from twelve countries and was formed last year in Indonesia at the joint meeting of the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council.

The job of the Working Committee is to draw up organizational plans for the EACC. The Rev. Muto will visit Christian Churches in Hongkong, Taiwan and Okinawa on his return to Japan.

"A TALE OF TWO CITIES" BENEFIT PERFORMANCE

Sir J. Arthur Rank, Vice-President of the World Council on Christian Education, and producer of the latest film of the great Charles Dickens' classic, "A Tale of Two Cities", gave a benefit performance of this film on June 17 at the Tokyo Theater. Proceeds from this performance are for the expenses of the 14th World Convention on Christian Education in Tokyo in August.

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Mr. F. T. Kennedy of the British Commonwealth Film Corporation and Mrs. Sumiko Kawakita of the Towa Film Corporation were special guests of the evening. Also present were the Rev. Nelson Chappel, General Secretary of the World Convention, Rev. Jonathan Fujita, Secretary of the Church School Department, NCC Japan, and Miss Jean MacDonald, Associate Secretary of the Church School Department.

SUMMER SERVICE PROJECTS

Christian youth of Japan, together with their friends from overseas will carry out three major service projects this summer under the direction of the national YMCA and the Youth Commission of the National Christian Council.

There will be one Ecumenical Work Camp, one High School Work Camp and one Student-In-Industry project. The Ecumenical Work Camp will be at Okunakayama, Iwate Prefecture from July 15 to August 15. This community is a focal point for an experiment in which Japan Church World Service is working to assist farmers to shift from traditional rice culture to field crop patterns of farming. This seems to be one of the best solutions to meet conditions of endemic poverty. Work campers will assist with construction of barns and other buildings. English will be the camp language.

The high School camp will be in Aomori from July 24-August 7. There in Hakkoda-san, a frontier village, repatriates are attempting to develop life anew. Last year work campers helped bring electric power utilities into the community for the first time. The project this year will be to develop facilities to bring water into the community. Japanese language will be used.

The students-in-industry project will be in Osaka from July 18-August 18. There the students will hold regular factory jobs with regular hours and salary. Through discussions with labor, management and community leaders, members will examine the relevance of Christian faith to economic life. Students will live together and earnings will cover the living costs. Again this is a Japanese language project.

TWELVE LUTHERAN MISSIONARY GROUPS IN JAPAN

There are twelve Lutheran groups at work in Japan at the present time, 11 of which came and began their work in the post-war period. One of the men who has been working for the past eight years for the unity of these groups was forced to leave his work in Japan because of illness in his immediate family. The Rev. David Vikner, of the Augustana Lutheran Church in the United States, was the first of his church to arrive in Japan in 1950 and immediately joined himself and the church he and his fellow missionaries developed to the existing Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church, the autonomous Japanese Lutheran Church. The Augustana missionaries work in Hiroshima, Yamaguchi and Shimane Prefectures.

Here are the names of the missionary groups presently at work in Japan. The first two and the one from Finland, are integral parts of the Japanese Lutheran Church.

1. Japan Lutheran Missionaries Association of the United Lutheran Church in America.
2. Augustana Lutheran Mission
3. Christian Mission to Buddhists
4. Evangelical Lutheran Church, Japan Mission
5. Lutheran Brethren Mission of Japan
6. Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland
7. Lutheran Free Church of Norway
8. Japan Mission, Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod
9. Norwegian Lutheran Mission
10. Norwegian Missionary Society
11. Japan Mission of the Suomi Synod
12. Missionary Association from Denmark

The Vikner family departed from Tokyo International Airport on Tuesday, June 24. Pastor Vikner will take the chair of missions at one of the Lutheran Theological Schools in the United States, the exact location is yet to be determined.

